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UNGA, UZ
SUBJECT: UN: 62ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION: SOUTH ASIA WRAP

REF: 06 USUN 2279

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR JEFF DELAURENTIS FOR REASON
1.4 (B & D)

SUMMARY:

11. (U) Joe Melrose served as the Senior Area Advisor for the 62nd UN General Assembly for South and Central Asia. The following is his summary of the UNGA as it pertained to South and Central Asia. The South and Central Asian states did not provide the drama of some other regions or even of the last UNGA.

THE GENERAL DEBATE

12. (U) The first two weeks were occupied by speeches providing general statements of the individual member states' orientation toward the General Assembly often delivered by Heads of State or Government or the Foreign Minister. Notable participants from South and Central Asia included Presidents Karzai of Afghanistan and the new President of Turkmenistan Gurbouguly Berdimuhamedow making his first visit to the UNGA and the first visit by a Turkmenistan Head of State in a number of years. His predecessor Saparmurat Nyazov passed away during the last week of last year's General Assembly

ELECTION TO THE UNSC

13. (U) The elections for the non-permanent Security Council seats proceeded smoothly and without the drama of last year. The two contests for seats were resolved with the withdrawal of the other candidates in favor of Costa Rica and Croatia after only several ballots - a far cry from the protracted process of last year to select a GRULAC state.

ELECTIONS FOR THE CAT AND IAAC

14. (SBU) The re-election of American candidate Felice Gaer to the Committee Against Torture (CAT) went well with our candidate receiving the highest number of votes. The election for the newly created Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC) saw American candidate Comptroller General of the U.S. David M. Walker defeat the Spanish nominee for the WEOG seat with 99 votes. SCA countries were strongly supportive of our candidate with eleven declaring their support early and one more at the end. Only Uzbekistan claimed to be awaiting instructions the day of the vote.

Given the results, when compared to our vote tally sheets, it would appear that SCA countries followed through on their oral or written commitments in the secret balloting. Posts may wish to acknowledge this support at an appropriate time.

RAPE RESOLUTION

15. (U) The U.S.-sponsored resolution against rape was passed by consensus after lengthy informals. Afghanistan was a co-sponsor and when it appeared that the resolution would require a vote, a number of SCA countries who felt unable to vote in favor did agree to abstain or be absent such as Bangladesh and Turkmenistan. In the end this was not necessary and the resolution was passed by consensus.

NOTES ON VARIOUS DELEGATIONS

16. (SBU) Afghanistan -- Long serving Perm Rep Raven Farhadi retired toward the end of the last UNGA and was replaced by Zahir Tanin. The much younger and more energetic Tanin has been very active and clearly desires to have Afghanistan be much more visible in UN fora. He is talking of proposing Afghani candidates for various commissions, etc. DPR Bazel also retired during the past year. On the Human Rights resolutions, Afghanistan supported the resolution on the DPRK and Belarus but as Tanin stated they were unable to support resolutions on countries "in their neighborhood" (Iran).

17. (SBU) Bangladesh -- Former Perm Rep Iftekar Chowdhury has moved on to be "Advisor for Foreign Affairs" (Foreign Minister) in the current government. His replacement Ms. Ismat Jahan was, according to Chowdhury, hand-picked by him. She had served as his Deputy in a previous assignment and he

thinks very highly of her. Jahan is quite well-informed but not nearly as flamboyant as her predecessor but still quite active. She advocates strongly for Bangladeshi participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations and various other activities as did her predecessor.

18. (C) Bhutan -- Perm Rep Daw Penjo has been extended as his government goes through the transition to a constitutional monarchy from a monarchy. He has a good reputation among colleagues. He does a good job of representing Bhutan's position on various issues. Within the bounds of his country's policy of not having an Ambassador to the US, he tries to maintain a strong, positive relationship. He has been very active in seeking educational opportunities for Bhutanese students and relationships between Bhutanese educational institutions and US and Canadian educational institutions and the recent changes in F-1 visas for Bhutanese students was happily received. With regard to the Country Specific Resolutions, Bhutan voted yes on DPRK and Belarus (changed from Abstention last year) and abstained on Iran. Penjo said that he was under great pressure including threats from some "neighbors" to support Iran. Former Deputy Perm Rep Penjor is still serving as an advisor to the new King who will not be officially crowned until 2008. No date has been set as yet.

19. (SBU) India -- Although Perm Rep Sen is still not particularly friendly to the U.S. he was much friendlier on a personal level this year. Deputy Perm Rep Ajai Malhotra, transferred to NY from Washington a year or so ago, seems much more favorably disposed and balances Sen to some extent. As happened last year in back to back conversations with Sen and Malhotra, subtle differences in tone were clearly discernible.

110. (SBU) Kazakhstan -- Relatively new Perm Rep Ms. Byrganym Aitimova is stylistically very different than her predecessor Kazykhanov who returned to the Ministry. Kazykhanov is a very experienced UN actor and was part of the delegation to the General Debate. This was the 13th General Assembly he attended. In conversations with both Aitimova and Kazykhanov, they expressed great satisfaction with the U.S.

Kazakhstan relationship. Kazakhstan is clearly pleased with its current relationship with the U.S. Kazakhstan voted in favor of the resolution against DPRK.

¶11. (SBU) Kyrgyzstan -- Perm Rep Jeenbaev seems quite competent although he relied heavily on Attache Jyldyz Kasymova who departed just before the General Debate. The departure of Kasymova, a promising young officer, seems to have left a void in the Kyrgyzstani delegation. An American academic who is a pro bono advisor confided that internal disorganization hampers their efficiency particularly with Kasymova gone. He expressed his frustration at not being able to get them to install an answering machine on their phone.

¶12. (SBU) Maldives -- Perm Rep Mohammed Lateef was replaced just before the General Debate began by Iruthisham Adam, a young officer who has done public diplomacy work in the past. Her last post was London. The mission has an exceptionally small staff and concentrates on certain issues. Probably because of inexperience, Adam is quite tentative. According to Adam, the Maldives wish to open an Embassy in Washington in the near future. She was very pleased that the NY Times listed the Maldives as one of the best places to vacation in a recent edition. Lateef returned home to become head of the Civil Service Commission.

¶13. (C) Nepal -- Perm Rep Madhu Acharya is a solid career government employee who has been extended in his current position. He would like to be appointed to a UN position such as Deputy SRSG some place. During the UNGA, we had several conversations on the situation in Nepal. He is optimistic that there will be a breakthrough soon and that he will be able to submit a letter to the SecGen on behalf of his government seeking an extension of the UN presence under the existing mandate. According to him, progress has been made on at least two of the main areas of disagreement - abolishing the monarchy immediately, proportional representation and integration of the fighters into one army.

With regard to the last, he says that there are about 31,000 fighters in cantonments which the Maoists want integrated into the Army. He says that the Gov. of Nepal estimates that about 10,000 or so would be disqualified for age, late registration or other factors and that they can absorb something in the range of 21,000, through early retirement or other inducements to some of the existing military personnel. With regard to the Nepalese offer of troops for Darfur, he says that the offer will remain on the table until the SecGen accepts it or rejects it. He related a conversation between himself and the Sudanese PR during which he says the Sudanese said while they have objected to Nepalese troops now, they might be acceptable in the next rotation. Acharya is easily approachable and willing to discuss the situation in Nepal. Nepal abstained on the country specific human rights resolutions.

¶14. (SBU) Pakistan -- There is little more that can be said about Perm Rep Munir Akram. He is extremely effective and is totally aware of every issue, even those of minor importance to Pakistan at the UN. His Deputy, Farukh Amil, transferred to NY from Washington about a year ago. He is quite competent and sought his current position because he "wanted to learn from the best" (Munir Akram).

¶15. (C) Sri Lanka -- Perm Rep Prasad Kariyawasam is very active in UN affairs. He is currently one of the Vice-Presidents of the GA. He has been heavily involved in small arms issues. As a result, he often delegates various issues to other members of his mission who may or may not be as good. He is a strong advocate for Sri Lanka. Counselor Mahishini Colonne seems to be very competent and enjoys his confidence. She handles Third Committee issues. Sri Lanka carried on a very proactive campaign during and after the General Debate dealing with the issue of Human Rights in Sri Lanka. In a conversation with the PR, Colonne and Sri Lankan Minister for Human Rights and Disaster Management, Mahinda Samarasinghe, the Minister tried to put a positive spin on

every action of the government with regard to Human Rights. During the half-hour meeting, they stressed that our information was dated. They noted, among other items, the Representative on Torture was allowed to visit any place in the country when he visited.

¶16. (SBU) Tajikistan -- Perm Rep Aslov is a scientist by training. This is his first venture into a diplomatic position and he filled a long vacancy in the Perm Rep position shortly before last year's UNGA. In addition, his English is weak so he tends to still be somewhat hesitant to engage in conversation in English. That being said, he clearly had more confidence and was more engaged this year as compared to last. He still has to cover a great deal of ground with a very limited staff.

¶17. (C) Turkmenistan - Perm Rep Ataeva is an experienced UN hand. While she understands English, she prefers to use Russian. The most striking difference between the last UNGA and this one was the dramatic change in the atmosphere at the Turkmenistan Mission. Both Ataeva and DPR Derdyev seemed far more relaxed and they seemed very pleased, perhaps even proud of developments in Turkmenistan, including the opening of the new UN Diplomatic Center and student studying abroad, as well as the increases in the number of students studying in Turkmenistan. Ataeva talked about the new President's desire to be more open. She still relies heavily on her Deputy, Serdar Durdyev, whose English is improving as is his confidence. His college-age daughter by a previous marriage visited NY and is about to return which encouraged him to get around more. He still seems to have a relatively realistic view of the problems in Turkmenistan. As the son of a Soviet era senior diplomat as well as a prior naval career, he is well-traveled although this is his first time in the U.S. He was generally supportive of a number of US positions, perhaps more so than the Turkmenistan voting record would indicate.

¶18. (SBU) Uzbekistan - The second most striking difference between the last UNA and this one involved Uzbekistan. While last year contact with Perm Rep Vohidov was very limited, although always cordial and professional, this year the first PR to contact me after my arrival was Vohidov and our contacts continued on a relatively frequent basis over coffee, etc. His daughter is an ER nurse at a local hospital

and his granddaughter also stays with him. He seems to be very closely watched from home. During the General Debate while his Foreign Minister was here, he was very pleased that a couple of members of the U.S. delegation accepted his invitation to a cultural presentation.

COMMENT

¶19. (SBU) Generally speaking most South and Central Asian countries do not support country specific HR resolutions based on the long standing NAM position although they sometimes abstain. The comments above do not include Plenary action on the Country Specific Human Rights Resolution on Burma because as of this writing that had not yet been considered. If voting in the Plenary follows Third Committee voting, Kazakhstan will change from an abstention last year to a yes, joining Afghanistan in the yes column and Tajikistan will move from not voting to abstaining. The Maldives will probably not vote. The "No" votes will come from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The others will abstain.

¶20. Part of the modest gains in the Human Rights area among SCA countries was perhaps the result of better preparation of materials and a more organized approach among all the various offices, posts and individuals involved.

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL

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